



March 10, 2008

Chestnut Hill Nursery and many business owners have long recognized that having a skilled workforce is a top priority for Connecticut businesses and appreciates the Education Committee's commitment to ensuring our workforce has the necessary tools to be successful. For this reason we support **HB 5867, An Act Concerning Vocational-Technical Schools.**

This measure would require that each vocational-technical school employ a development officer to promote the schools to middle school students and this is an important undertaking and we are supportive; however, more needs to be done. Manufacturer's across the state are concerned about a shortage of skilled workers to fill new positions and replace retiring employees. This is why increasing public awareness of the vocational-technical schools is so important and increasing the state's investment in upgrading school facilities and providing resources for equipment and supplies is so necessary.

Furthermore, we need to ensure that we are not just increasing the number of graduates from vocational-technical schools but that they are meeting the current technical school requirements, such as the NIMS[®] (National Institute of Metalworking Skills)-certification. By having NIMS standards in place, our workforce will be able to match the skills required on a national level.

The business community strongly supports including these actions as part of the measure to strengthen our vocational-technical schools. By investing more heavily to expand the capacity of our technical high schools and community colleges we can recruit and train more students in manufacturing technology programs. We are encouraged by the legislative actions taken thus far and support expanding those measures to promote and invest in Vocational-Technical Schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written statement and if you have any questions please contact me Kevin Sullivan at kevin@chestnutnursery.com or 860.966.0153.